

**Testimony of John Murphy on behalf of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group regarding  
H.B. No. 6389 AN ACT TRANSFERRING THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DIVISION OF  
SPECIAL REVENUE, CONSUMER COUNSEL, HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE AND BOARD  
OF ACCOUNTANCY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION.**

Good afternoon, Senator Doyle, Representative Taborsak, honorable members of the General Law Committee. My name is John Murphy, and I'm speaking on behalf of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group regarding House Bill 6389 as it relates to the Office of Health Care Advocate and Consumer Counsel.

CCAG appreciates all of the hard work put in by the administration to find ways to achieve efficiencies and save money in a most difficult financial time. However, the Office of Health Care Advocate and Consumer Counsel need to remain autonomous if they are to be effective.

I would like to first direct my remarks to the Office of Health Care Advocate or OHA. In his time as Health Care Advocate, Kevin Lembo and his team built the office into a national model of an independent office that Connecticut health care consumers are be proud of. OHA is paid for through an assessment on insurers and is already an efficient operation that saves Connecticut consumers roughly \$4.00 for every dollar the office spends on consumer advocacy. There is no savings in state funds or increased efficiencies by moving OHA.

OHA, by nature of their work on behalf of consumers, needs to work closely with the Insurance Department and that is facilitated by being located within the Insurance Department. That physical presence of the OHA office makes a big difference in their ability to assist consumers and saves time.

OHA is also the voice for consumers when it makes policy recommendations and a resource for consumer education that people rely on. OHA was a strong voice for mental health parity when the Charter Oak Health Plan was conceived.

The Office of Consumer Counsel or OCC is our advocate for all utility ratepayers. OCC seeks to ensure just and reasonable rates and reliable utility service for customers of Connecticut's electric, gas, telephone, and water utilities and reasonable protections for cable television customers. OCC's advocacy includes the promotion of beneficial policies for ratepayers, such as the conservation of energy resources.

Much like OHA, OCC is not funded from state tax dollars, but rather from an extremely modest surcharge on ratepayers. OCC saves ratepayers at least \$4.00 for every dollar devoted to OCC. They, too, are more effective when housed close by the state entity they work with most, the Department of Public Utility Control. I know we are not here today to debate the merits of the administration's proposed merger of DPUC and DEP, and CCAG is generally supportive of the merger

as long as it's done right. However, OCC needs to stay in close proximity to whatever entity is procuring energy or regulating utilities so Connecticut consumers have a strong, effective voice representing them.

In closing, both the Office of Health Care Advocate and the Office of Consumer Counsel are funded outside of the state budget and return far more than the original investment. They are both strong voices and advocates for Connecticut consumers. With all due respect to your committee, it makes sense to not move OFA and OCC into the Department of Consumer Protection. Thank you.